



To: Superintendent of Schools

From: Chief Operating Officer

Date: December 11, 2020

Re: Response to motion related to STEM Academy departures since January 20, 2020

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**7.1. [By Jackie Doherty]: Request the Superintendent provide a report on the number of staff and students who have left the STEM Academy since January 2020 including those families who are on the wait list to transfer out of the school. In addition to numbers, the report should include the reasons for those departures based on information collected from confidential exit interviews. No names used in the report—simply identify person by role: parent, teacher, para etc. The report should also include an update on replacement staffing both at the time of school opening and now, indicating whether all classes currently have licensed teachers in place and when that occurred.**

Debra Jarvis, HR Generalist; Daroth Yann, Assistant HR Director; Sophorn Keo, HR Executive Secretary, and I collected responsive information to provide the following details in response to the above motion.

**A. Number of staff who have left the STEM Academy since January 2020 (with reasons)**

Four (4) compendia were issued in the 2019/2020 school year which gave all teachers the opportunity to transfer to new positions. In total, 47 teachers in all schools exercised contractual rights to switch schools through the 4 Compendia (Compendium I- 15, Compendium II- 13, Compendium III- 10, Compendium IV-9). This contractual language specifies that if two or more Lowell teachers apply for a position, a principal must pick one of those two teachers for an open position. Fourteen (14) STEM teachers exercised their right last school year under the compendia process to transfer to another school. These 14 teachers were given the opportunity to provide feedback on the reasoning for transferring by their choice of email, in writing, or by telephone interview.

One (1) teacher requested a telephonic interview. That teacher reported an excellent experience at the STEM, and left because the teacher had interned at another school in Lowell prior to becoming a teacher and her goal had always been to return to that school. This teacher was thankful for the opportunity to provide feedback through this motion. HR has also

received return correspondence from three teachers who intend to provide responses. I will provide further updates when responses are received.

**B. Number of Students who have left the STEM Academy since January 2020 (with reasons)**

Thirty-one (31) students have left the STEM since January 2020. Existing data within the District supported the following reasons for leaving the STEM:

Moved to new area	21
Homeschooled	1
Daycare (K)	1
Parochial school	7
Charter School	1

HR wrote to all of these families on November 18, 2020 to confirm the already recorded reason for their departure from the District. HR did not receive any responses to these mailed letters requesting confirmation or other feedback.

**C. Replacement of staffing at the time of school opening**

Assistant HR Director, Daroth Yann, reviewed the licensure of 21 new hires at the STEM. This number is different from the 14 that left via the compendia process because of additional teachers that were required to support COVID-19 in-person learning. Presently, at the time of this report, it appears that 1 teacher has not uploaded sufficient information to qualify for a license, but should qualify for an emergency license. HR is working with this teacher to upload sufficient qualifying information. There are also two paraprofessionals currently covering medical leaves of teachers at the STEM.

Delays in the budget caused by financial uncertainty caused many hires to be made in late August and early September because the hiring freeze could not be lifted until August 19, 2020, when the budget was voted on by the School Committee. The legislature and the Federal Government had been delayed in providing firm budget numbers throughout the summer, and we could wait no longer than this point to begin hiring. We were also cautious about hiring new employees throughout the summer because we did not want to jeopardize the employment of current employees. Additionally, we did not want to hire new employees in the summer, who might be bumped out of a job by more senior teachers, then leaving these new teachers with no employment opportunities. Additionally, the state of the Coronavirus, and whether teaching would occur in-person or remotely, additionally complicated recruitment. HR heavily utilized the paid advertisement service of "INDEED" last summer in order to increase the candidate pool within this shortened period. Additionally, word-of-mouth recruiting and referrals were also heavily used. Due to this short time period, some substitutes were also used at the STEM while teachers were in-processed and passed background tests as many teachers were being in processed throughout the district at the same time. In one case, unfortunately a

class was not covered for at least a day during the first week of school. Records indicate that all necessary positions are now filled.

**Is replacement of staff complete now?**

Yes. The 14 positions of those who transferred within the district have been filled. There are currently two positions in which paraprofessionals are substitute teaching for leaves. There are also 7 hires that are COVID-19 supplemental teachers.

**D. Do all classes have licensed teachers in place and when did that occur?**

At the time of the start of school, all staff were licensed, or had applied for an emergency license, and told that an emergency license was a condition of employment. During intake for these staff, Ms. Jarvis has also reminded them of certification requirements. DESE has allowed emergency licenses for anyone who has a college degree. In early October, Ms. Yann reviewed the licensures and followed-up with the new teachers. Ms. Yann later followed up on several new hires that showed licensure issues. During the months of September and October, she followed up with new hires with guidance and procedures to attain emergency license. On December 11, she verified that one staff member still has to obtain a license, but this teacher appears to qualify for an emergency license as a college graduate. HR will continue to follow-up with this teacher to ensure compliance.